

## Original Paper

# Research on Hegel's View of Practice

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### Abstract

*The discussion on practice has a long tradition in the history of Western philosophy. However, from Marx, practical philosophy has began a special research of direction of philosophy. Marxist philosophy has realized the revolution of philosophy history with its view of practical activity. But as far as the concept of practice is concerned, it is Hegel's view of practice that is fully discussed and can be used as a source of Marxist philosophy of practice. Hegel takes free will as the essence of man, and the practice of rational choice itself is not only a manifestation of freedom, but also a manifestation of the whole essence of man. Therefore, Hegel's practice not only contains theory, but also manifests through intermediary.*

### Keywords

*hegel, practice, purpose, intermediary, theory*

## 1. Introduction

The uniqueness of human beings lies in practical activities and the continuous evolution and development of human society brought about by practical activities. The history of human practice embodies the full nature of man. However, it is a matter of modern times for human beings to reflect on their own practical activities from a theoretical perspective, especially at the level of philosophy. Suining said that the scientific view of practice was laid by Marx and Engels, and this is why Marxist philosophy is the great revolution in the history of philosophy. The theoretical source of this revolution of philosophy is Hegel's view of practice. Therefore, studying Hegel's view of practice has profound theoretical significance for understanding the philosophical revolution realized by Marxist philosophy.

## 2. Purpose Is the Nature of Practical Activities

Practical activities constitute the whole essence of human beings, and the purpose is the essential characteristics of practical activities. In Hegel, it is of great significance to engage in the production and

use of tools for production activities, but only perceptual activities can not constitute a practical activity as the essence of human beings, and constitute the essence of human beings. Hegel also examines human activities from the essence of human freedom. He believes that as the essence of human beings, the essence of practical activities lies in their purpose. “Humans have their own purpose because they have something ‘sacred’ in themselves - that is what we call ‘rational’ from the beginning; and from its activity and conscious power, called ‘freedom’” (Note 2). That is to say, since people are free in essence, and the whole essence of human beings lies in the practical activities of human beings, the freedom of human beings lies in the “rationality” of human beings. The reason why practical activities are the essence of human beings, the reasoning people’s practical activities has rational power. The power of human reason is the embodiment of the essence of human freedom. “The highest content that can be mastered in the subject can be named ‘freedom’. The soul is the supreme rule of freedom” (Note 3). “World history is nothing more than the progress of the ‘freedom’ consciousness; this kind of progress is something we must recognize in its inevitability” (Note 4).

Freedom, as the core issue of practice, was explicitly raised and discussed at Kant. In Kant, freedom as the principle of the will shows that “pure reason has the power of practice” (Note 5). This kind of pure reason contains the idea of combining reason and practice. However, “freedom” in Kant’s ideology is a pure form that transcends all specific content, and “practice” also mainly refers to the moral cultivation of the human heart. Therefore, “freedom” can only be a moral axiom for Kant, and can only be in the distant world. In Hegel’s view, the pure form of rebellion against all content is not “freedom,” but rather rather “willful”. Of course, in Hegel’s view, “freedom” is not just a subjective thing, or just for the purpose of form. “The waywardness” is a violation of reason, “not because of the rationality of the will, but by the occasional motive and the dependence of this motive on the perceptual external world” (Note 6). In fact, reason is the foundation of human beings. It is because of reason that people have the will and action of being free. Therefore, as a conscious activity with the purpose of freedom, practical activities are objective activities that contain rational knowledge. Therefore, freedom itself unifies understanding and practice.

Therefore, the true “freedom” that Hegel understands is to eliminate the subjective one-sidedness, and to eliminate the objective one-sidedness from the alienation of the object itself, to achieve unity and object unity through cognition and practice, and this unity it is specific and historical. Here, Hegel actually recognizes that not only the object has a “necessary kingdom” on the subject, but also that the subject itself has a “necessary kingdom” when it is self-objective. Therefore, when Hegel strives to realize the unity of the subject and the object, it does not contain the idea that “freedom is the understanding of inevitability”, and it implies the idea of changing the subjective world with the understanding of inevitability. As a kind of life, man is also dominated by nature like other species. However, people are knowing themselves and developing themselves in the constant understanding and transformation of the “inevitable world”, thus realizing of human beings of the whole essence. In short, freedom is constantly manifested through the practice of human beings under the control of rational

understanding. And rational understanding reflects the purpose to a certain extent, so the nature of freedom and the characteristics of practical activities are the purpose.

### 3. Intermediary Is the Performance of Practical Activities

Hegel's great historical merit is to reveal the purpose of the characteristics of human practice, but the realization of the purpose without the intermediary is not acceptable. The creation and use of tools in the process of human beings engaged in purposeful practical activities are also a feature of human practice and a manifestation of practical activities. That is to say, the means used in specific practical activities constitute the specific process of the purposeful activities and also the purposeful practical activities. At the same time, Hegel also pointed out that in terms of the objective premise of means, the means is also the object, but it is not the original object of the unprocessed nature, but the "things established by the concept" (Note 7). Means is both an organic procedure to the purpose of the activity and an objective defined by the concept. Therefore, the intermediary has both the duality of the subject and the object, which makes the means become the intermediary that connects the subject and the object and makes it unified.

The establishment of an intermediary is the advancement of the purpose of the activity, and is the beginning of the unity of the subject and the object. The subject is rational, so the subject is always purposeful. However, when the means are not established, the purpose of the subject can only be a subjective impulse. In this case, the objective world is the substance subjective world. Only by means of intermediary means, the elimination of the object's dissident and the realization of freedom can realize the unity of the subject and the object. In Hegel, practical activities are just a kind of reasoning of logical activities, so the means of intermediary is only the middle term of such reasoning. He said, "The purpose is to combine objectiveness with objectivity and to combine with oneself in objectivity. Means is the middle term of inference" (Note 8). Hegel here raises practical activities to the height of logical reasoning to give understanding and give practice. Activity is the meaning of logical reasoning, which reveals the essence of human practice in the dimension of philosophy. As Lenin said, "People's practical activities must make people's consciousness repeat the various logical lattices in order to obtain the meaning of justice" (Note 9). However, the lattice in the logic has practical significance only in the logical deduction. As a medium term of time reasoning, means only has practical significance in practical activities. Therefore, the means only has the possibility of achieving the unity of the subject and the object in the static, and it does not have its reality. Only in the logic of practice dynamic, means become the subjects and objects of the connection, and it has the reality that the subject and the object are unified.

Hegel also pointed out that the process of unification of subject and object is infinite, and there must be infinite progress of mediation in the process of infinite unity of subject and object. In order to achieve the unity of the subject and the object, we must resort to the intermediary, "a means of inserting their relationship between this objectivity and subjective purpose" (Note 10). But as Hegel pointed out, "this mean is also one that has been the object specified by the purpose", so the objectivity and purpose of this

object must be inserted into a new means, so that it is endless. This constitutes infinite progression of the intermediary. According to the “infinite progress of the intermediary”, Hegel came to an important conclusion: all topics except the subject can be essentially a means. He wrote, “All objects are equally method of purpose, and an external purpose is achieved between them” (Note 11). This shows that the person who is the subject is the person himself, the realization process of human freedom and true liberation. In other words, in this process, only the person who is the subject cannot be used as a means and should not be used as a means. For the ultimate purpose of man, the realization of all externally limited purposes is a means.

In terms of importance, although the means are not comparable to the purpose, and the means are subordinate to the purpose, as mentioned above, the means still have its special importance. Whether it is the ultimate liberation of mankind or the realization of the specific limited purpose of mankind, it is inseparable from the means and methods that are compatible with it, and it depends on the practical activities of creating and using means. Human beings can only obtain the right to survive in practice, and they can live freely and realize their own liberation.

#### **4. Practice Activities Contain and Exceed Theory**

In the view of practice, Hegel discards Kant's thoughts. He pointed out that in terms of theoretical understanding, because Kant splits the connection between subject and object, “all knowledge is always subjective and beyond subjectivity. It is the external thing-in-itself, so that there are splits between rational understanding and practical activities. (Note 12) On the practical level, since the “self-awareness” that can carry out rational understanding in practice activities is also regarded as the object self, the practice activities have completely become a blind movement based on feelings. Therefore, the “freedom” and moral self-discipline pursued by Kant in the field of practice are actually the same law of self-determination of the will, and its essence is “ $A=A$ ”, and there is no substantive content. This is actually the fact that specific truths and true freedoms have been pushed to the “other world”.

Kant made three moral publicity in order to express his liberty and the sacredness of moral law in practice, namely, freedom of will, immortality of the soul, and existence of God. For Kant's three moral publicity in practice, Hegel believes that this is the weakness of Kant's satisfaction with subjective delusions. He believes that Kant's so-called “self-physical” cannot be avoided by understanding and practice. Kant's escaping from specific objects can only be set as unknowable. So that the division of subject and object, the division of theory and practice become two aspect of causality in each other. In Hegel's view, the acquisition of truth and freedom relies on and grasps this unity. It is based on this that Hegel proposes that practical activities contain theory and higher than theory, thus revealing another characteristic of practical activities. He said, “The theoretical thing is essentially contained in the practice of things”. “If we do not have reason, we cannot have the will. On the contrary, the will contains theory in itself” (Note 13). At the same time, Hegel also pointed out that practice is higher

than theory, and the reason why practice is higher than theory is that practice “not only has universal qualifications, but also has absolute reality qualifications”. (Note 14)

Hegel especially underscored that practical activities cannot be without theory. The practice itself is a free activity, or it is in freedom and constantly fulfills its own activities. Therefore, practical activities necessarily include understanding and grasping the elements of the subject and the fit. Otherwise, the subject will have no knowledge of the object and its own “necessary kingdom”, nor can it talk about purpose, and it does not matter how to establish a means to adapt to the purpose, and there is no practice for freedom and human liberation. It is precisely for the purpose of making the practical activities have the purpose and the means to adapt them to become the real activities of freedom and the practice of realizes freedom. Therefore, Hegel attach great importance to that the person who is the subject must undergo long-term training and rational training. The difference between Kant and Hegel in the relationship between theory and practice has had a tremendous impact on the development of philosophy. Starting from Kant, the rationality is excluded from the practice of trying to achieve freedom. This constitutes the anti-rationalism pursued by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, as well as existentialism. This is not only a retrogression of Hegel, but also a retrogression of Kant’s philosophy. Hegel’s assertion that “human practice essentially contains theoretical things” is a correct summary of the theoretical practice of human practice and the history of human society. Try it out, human society begins with practical activities, and practical activities contain the elements of theory, although this theory is still in its infancy and does not resort to written language. However, with the development of human practice, the status and total use of theory in practice is not weakened, but instead plays an increasingly important role. Without the correct theory, practical activities have no correct and reasonable purpose, and practical activities cannot be called practice activities. Therefore, it is not wise to try to exclude the theoretical elements from the practical activities. It is just a kind of obscurantism that makes people back to the animal era.

## 5. Summary

Hegel’s view of practice basically involves the basic characteristics of human practice, and has unique ideas in the purpose and intermediary of practical activities. Of course, in terms of practical philosophy, Hegel’s contribution is far more than what is said in this article. For example, he does not set a rigid dogma for human activities, but tries to reveal that “people should respect himself and be able to match themselves. Got something noble”. However, it must be pointed out that Hegel’s view of practice is a head-on-stand. He attributes all human activities to the dialectical movement of absolute ideas.

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## Notes

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- Note 2. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Translated by Wang Zaoshi. *The Philosophy of History*. Beijing: San Lian Bookstore, 1959, 73.
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